

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 409

By Turner

A RESOLUTION to recognize Johnnie B. Watson on the occasion of his retirement.

WHEREAS, it is appropriate that the members of this General Assembly should honor those citizens who have performed with uncommon devotion and enthusiasm throughout their years of industry; and

WHEREAS, Johnnie B. Watson is one such person, who has served with probity as the eleventh president of LeMoyne-Owen College in Memphis and will embark upon a well-earned retirement on June 30, 2015; and

WHEREAS, throughout his exemplary fifty-year career in education, Mr. Watson has distinguished himself as a public-spirited citizen of the highest order and as an exceptional asset to his community and this State; and

WHEREAS, born and raised in the LeMoyne Gardens housing project located across the street from the college, Johnnie B. Watson grew up in the shadows of the campus he would one day lead as the first and only alumnus to serve as president of LeMoyne-Owen College; and

WHEREAS, after graduating from Booker T. Washington High School, Mr. Watson enrolled as a student at LeMoyne-Owen College, where he served as president of Future Teachers of America and as president of Alpha Phi Alpha Fraternity, experiences that helped him hone his leadership skills and style; and

WHEREAS, in a testament to his scholarship, Mr. Watson was offered a teaching job in the Memphis City Schools system at Carver High School before earning his Bachelor of Arts degree from LeMoyne-Owen College in 1960. He continued his postgraduate education at Indiana University, from which he received a master's degree in 1966; and

WHEREAS, Johnnie B. Watson's commendable association with Memphis City Schools includes service as a classroom teacher, school counselor, school board administrator, and deputy superintendent; and

WHEREAS, upon retiring from Memphis City Schools in 1992, Mr. Watson immediately accepted a post at Rhodes College, where he served with probity as Distinguished Associate Professor and as chair of the Department of Education; and

WHEREAS, in 2001, he was called once more to serve Memphis City Schools, this time as superintendent, the school system's highest office; and

WHEREAS, Johnnie B. Watson began his estimable term of service as president of LeMoyne-Owen College in 2006, and quickly instituted a series of improvements that placed the school on solid footing for the future, both academically and financially; and

WHEREAS, under his astute leadership, the college experienced a 200% increase in enrollment between 2007 and 2012; eliminated a \$1.7 million deficit, which facilitated accreditation from the Southern Association of Colleges and Schools through 2023; and completed a number of capital improvements, including the renovation of Brownlee, Sweeney, and Steel Halls, and the construction of a new, \$13.5 million residence hall; and

WHEREAS, his many accomplishments aside, Mr. Watson is perhaps proudest of the love and support he shares with his wife, Loretta Jones Watson, and he is an active and devout member of Mt. Moriah-East Baptist Church; and

WHEREAS, Johnnie B. Watson exemplifies the spirit and allegiance to family and community that are characteristic of a true Tennessean; and

WHEREAS, throughout his career in education, Mr. Watson has demonstrated the utmost professionalism, ability, and integrity, winning the unbridled respect and admiration of his colleagues and a grateful public; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED NINTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that we join with LeMoyne-Owen graduates State Representatives Larry Miller '76, Joe Towns Jr. '78, and Johnnie R. Turner '62, and the LeMoyne-Owen College National Alumni Association in saluting Dr. Johnnie B. Watson on the occasion of his retirement.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that an appropriate copy of this resolution be prepared for presentation with this final clause omitted from such copy.